




An Interview With MG Roger A. Nadeau, ATEC CG

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As we continue to wage the global war on terrorism (GWOT), the acquisition community seeks ways to better equip, supply, and support the Army's warfighters quickly. One group that is often overlooked and, in some cases, not viewed as Army acquisition community members, is the Army's equipment and weapon systems testers and evaluators. The U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command's (ATEC's) mission is to test and evaluate most equipment put in the hands of Army Soldiers. In this interview, the ATEC Commanding General (CG), MG Roger A. Nadeau, discusses ATEC's role and how the command is transforming to better support its customers.

A Stryker combat vehicle undergoes rigorous performance testing on one of Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG's) 240 miles of road courses. YPG's desert location closely resembles current fighting conditions and has provided critical test data on equipment and systems to be operated under such environmental challenges. (Photo courtesy of YPG.)



AL&T: ATEC is a consolidation of the Developmental Test Command, Aberdeen, MD; the Operational Test Command, Fort Hood, TX; and the Army Evaluation Center, Alexandria, VA. Why does ATEC exist? More specifically, what is the mission of ATEC and how does your command make a contribution to the Army?

Nadeau: ATEC's mission is to assess the performance capabilities of almost every piece of equipment used in any way by Soldiers. The two basic questions we ask are: Does it work? How do we know? Our end-state

assessments address effectiveness, suitability, and survivability. Our assessment helps Army leadership decide if Soldiers will ultimately use the item.

ATEC offers vast experience to the acquisition community. On a typical day, ATEC conducts over 1,100 test events for more than 400 systems at 26 locations across 17 states. We work with our partner acquisition organizations to provide warfighters with the most technologically advanced equipment. ATEC helps ensure that warfighters receive the safest, most

reliable equipment that is effective, suitable, and survivable on the battlefield. Through ATEC's mutual partnerships and test community networks, our common goal is to provide Soldiers with the equipment they need when they need it. We help by providing information that facilitates the decisions of the Milestone Decision Authorities. Also, the information we provide supports decisions pertaining to the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD] oversight programs for which we are the Army's representative test agency.



ATEC's personnel and test facilities played a key role in conducting rigorous ballistic tests of the MRAP vehicles prior to accelerated fielding by the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center (ATC), MD.)

ATEC recognizes that we must earn the right to be brought into the acquisition process earlier and that we must prove our value by reducing program costs, developmental timelines, and program risk. ATEC is not a decision agency. Success for ATEC is being recognized as a trusted advisor to the acquisition community and, more importantly, a trusted agent for the Soldier.

AL&T: Some people often say that ATEC is part of the U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC) and others say ATEC reports to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. What is ATEC's reporting chain of command?

Nadeau: We are owned by neither, but we work for both. To clarify, ATEC is a direct reporting unit to the Army Staff, specifically, the Chief of Staff, Army [CSA].

ATEC responds to the CSA through the Director of the Army Staff and the Vice CSA. It was set up that way to preserve our independence in the evaluation process. Our daily challenge is to make our relationship better with the acquisition community so we are seen as a value-added part of the process and not a roadblock that causes things to slow down.

AL&T: The Army has been undergoing transformation for several years. Army organizations are changing their processes and procedures. How is ATEC committed to the Army's transformational changes?

Nadeau: You can start with the Army transformation process, but you need to go even further than that.

Because of the transformational focus throughout DOD, everything is changing in some way. The glide path that we are on is parallel and designed to be additive to the CSA's vision of Army transformation. Our ties to the office of Director, Operational Test and Evaluation [DOT&E] make us part of the transition that is occurring throughout DOD test agencies. The reporting chain that I mentioned remains the same because of the independent nature of what we do. We are not pressured by the cost, schedule, and performance challenges of the acquisition community. That is not a shield to hide behind; it is a statement of fact. One transformational process challenge is to understand the pressures faced by program executive officers [PEOs] and program/project managers [PMs]. By becoming more aware of how they do their jobs, we can figure out how to do our job better.

If you look at the *DoD 5000* series relative to the life-cycle management process, the movement of a typical system through the acquisition process

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is linear. For greater efficiency in today's operating environment, we need to be less linear where appropriate to better serve Soldiers. In looking for non-linear process scenarios, we had

to figure out what that meant to our business. We knew the linear process was not being proactive to providing good support. The *5000* series does not mandate test requirements for pre-Milestone A. Mostly, you see the preponderance of organized scheduled test events somewhere between Milestone B and shortly after

Milestone C to support entry into production. Our organizational construct starts with developmental testing [DT] as a direct hire to the PEOs to help them in their developmental decisions. After DT, we conduct operational testing [OT] in support of Milestone C production decisions. The 5000 series does not encourage learning from DT, in a way to shorten OT. That's the standard acquisition process. The Army has been at war over a sustained period of time and the rapid support to the war challenge was: How do we support testing of equipment during the GWOT? We must do things faster to support combat Soldiers as quickly as we can. That doesn't mean we can put equipment whose performance is unproven in the hands of Soldiers. But under the concept of rapid acquisition, how much testing is enough testing? The answer is generally, 'it depends.'

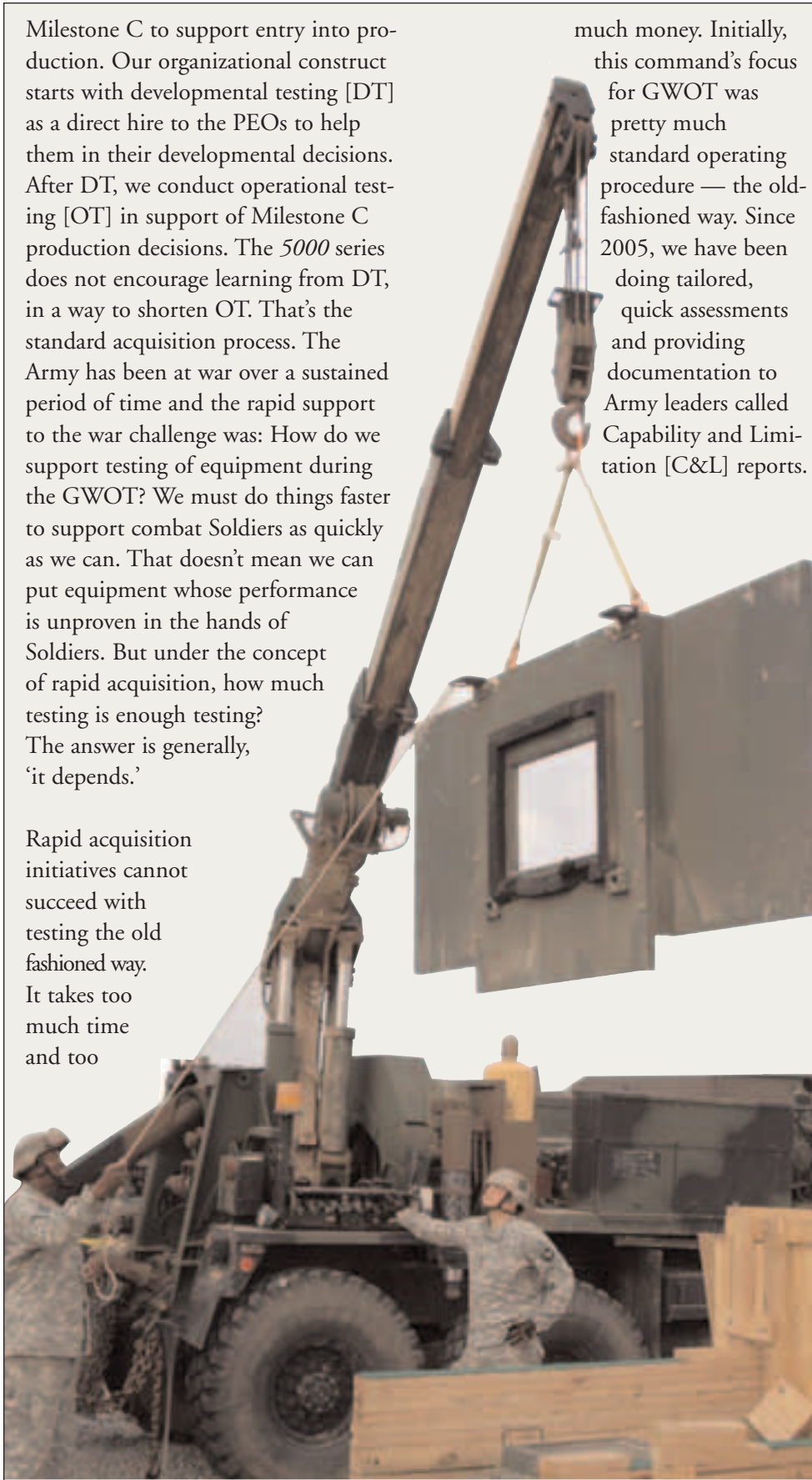
Rapid acquisition initiatives cannot succeed with testing the old fashioned way. It takes too much time and too

much money. Initially, this command's focus for GWOT was pretty much standard operating procedure — the old-fashioned way. Since 2005, we have been doing tailored, quick assessments and providing documentation to Army leaders called Capability and Limitation [C&L] reports.

In those reports, we provide warfighters a performance analysis of the equipment or system and its strengths and weaknesses — not pass/fail. Army decision makers can make procurement/fielding decisions using C&L report data. Combat commanders also read the C&L reports to better understand where the equipment or system best fits into their mission and if they want to accept it into their units.

From our perspective, C&L reports help ensure minimum risk to the Soldier by identifying equipment strengths and weaknesses. It is a faster way to document equipment performance and help facilitate procurement/fielding decisions.

Another document driving transformational change to traditional acquisition programs is the joint Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and DOT&E memorandum dated Dec. 22, 2007. The memorandum challenges the acquisition and test communities of the services and agencies to think differently along some very specific lines. The memorandum calls for the test community to integrate DT and OT when appropriate and to use all available information. That means we can potentially take both contractor and Army DT information and use it to perhaps shorten OT requirements. Additionally, we are challenged to make better use of modeling and simulation in the evaluation process. We see the memorandum as a catalyst for change that allows us to apply those challenges on a case-by-case basis for every piece of equipment we test. Our challenge is how to get ATEC involved as early as pre-Milestone A and remain engaged throughout the life cycle in a way that saves time and money over the long haul. We are working on implementing that now.



Forward-deployed ATEC personnel continue to gather feedback from Soldiers firsthand on the effectiveness of Army equipment and systems in theater such as the add-on armor kits seen here being installed on a Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles truck. This information has proven invaluable to senior Army leaders for making timely acquisition decisions. (U.S. Army photo.)



The Stryker MGS undergoes a live-fire test at ATC. The ATC is one of ATEC's test centers across the U.S. that conducted ballistic, mobility, and survivability testing on Stryker MGS prior to its deployment into theater. (Photo courtesy of ATC.)

We are constantly educating our workforce on how our thinking needs to change. We must implement transformational changes in ways that do not compromise the organization's mission or integrity. Externally, to support transformational changes, we are working to show private industry how we can be of assistance to them. Usually, PEOs and PMs don't see early involvement by the test community as a good thing. We are perceived as a roadblock to schedule success. We need to earn our way into the PEOs' and PMs' developmental timelines and

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prove to them that there is value added to the early involvement of the test community. There are already many examples of small successes toward that end state. ATEC was involved in the development and fielding of add-on armor for tactical wheeled vehicles, the test-fix-test cycle of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected [MRAP] vehicle, the collection and distribution of operational and combat data to help facilitate fixes to the Stryker Mobile Gun System [MGS] and its recommended employment methods, and the testing and evaluation of a wide range of improvised explosive device [IED] jammers.

AL&T: What is your approach to the Army's Lean Six Sigma (LSS) effort and how is ATEC using LSS?

Nadeau: Just over a year ago, ATEC revisited its strategic plan. We rewrote the strategic focus. When we did that, we found a number of the LSS projects were not necessarily the most productive projects toward achieving our end-state goals. That had to be fixed. We put a halt to some things we thought would not support the end states of the command's strategic plan. We made sure the remaining projects were in alignment with our strategic goals. Now we have a pretty robust LSS program within the organization. It will get even better over time. Starting at ATEC Headquarters [HQ], we are constantly reviewing our value added to our subordinate elements. We look at it as the inverted organization chart, looking up and saying: What have we done for you lately? If we don't have a good answer

for that at the corporate HQ, then we're not earning our paycheck and properly supporting our workforce.

Externally, our LSS effort is focused in large part on the challenges OSD identified relative to how we are doing business and the parallel efforts of Army transformation. How do we change? How do we alter or reconstruct test operations to fit the challenges of early and constant involvement? We are examining initiatives that will save the Army time and money without compromising the independence of the evaluation or the acceptance of risk in the decision factors.

AL&T: In closing, most of your career has been in acquisition assignments. Even though testers and evaluators are members of the acquisition community, I sense that some testers and evaluators view other acquisition members with skepticism. What do you as an acquisition professional bring to the ATEC team?

Nadeau: I bring an understanding of the acquisition rules and regulations that allow me to educate the ATEC community on the challenges facing PEOs. I'm convinced that the more we

know about how PEOs do their job, the better we can do ours in support of their mission. I hope I also bring a reputation of fairness and a team spirit within the acquisition community that will enable ATEC to help PEOs and PMs, quickly working through some of the old myths that testers are more to be avoided than embraced. That said, I'd also be quick to point out that a good reputation might get you in the door the first time. It's performance that will get you an invitation to come back.

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A variant of the MRAP vehicle undergoes grueling cross-country road evaluation during operational testing conducted by Soldiers and ATEC personnel at White Sands Missile Range, NM. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Operational Test Command.)



An IED explodes alongside one of the paved roads at YPG's National Counterterrorism/Counterinsurgency Integrated Test and Evaluation Center. Numerous counter-IED systems and technology have been, and continue to be, tested by ATEC personnel, allowing for critical information to be provided to senior Army leaders for making timely utilization and acquisition decisions to support Soldiers in the combat zones. (Photo courtesy of YPG.)